

# PRESIDENTIAL VISIT TO THE FAR EAST



The President, John Humphries, and Chief Executive, John Hooper, recently visited Singapore, Malaysia and Hong Kong between 29 March and 09 April. This was the first such visit for several years with the principal objectives of re-engaging with members, revitalising membership, identifying opportunities of local support through the British Chamber of Commerce, presenting to students and reviewing opportunities for accrediting University diplomas and degrees for entry to Associate and Corporate level of membership. In addition, we met with various organisations, establishing or re-establishing contact, to discuss ways in which we could gain greater recognition for the Association and for our members in the Region.

## Singapore

Following flights from Heathrow, via Hong Kong, we arrived in Singapore on Sunday 31 March and settled in to our hotel for the night to prepare for the series of meetings arranged for the next day. The first meeting of the day commenced at 10.00am at the British Chamber of Commerce where we met with their Executive Director, Brigitte Holtschneider. The British Chamber of Commerce Singapore is one of three chosen to participate in the UKTI Headstart programme to encourage and support UK SMEs to expand into South East Asia. A number of Business Groups have been set up, including the Property and Construction Business Group, which meets on a regular basis at the Chamber of Commerce offices and includes many influential members/organisations. Brigitte explained the benefits ABE could receive in the form of networking/introductions to businesses and access to potential members through the group. Events were arranged and meeting facilities could be made available should we wish to join.

We were advised that celebrations for Chinese New Year had occurred before our arrival and, according to Feng Shui experts, the Year of the Water Snake promises 'better times, thanks to its well balanced element combinations'. This should be promising for both business and personal outlooks which Singapore needs as, last year, operating in Singapore became more difficult in some sectors due to the tightening foreign labour policies. We must wait and see what the year brings.

The main questions being asked in Singapore are 'How can we help to engineer a more sustainable approach to property development and ownership?' and 'What impact will issues such as labour restrictions and the drive for enhanced productivity have on the wider business community within Singapore?'

We then moved on to Nanyang Technological University where we met with Professor Fung Tat Ching, Associate Professor Chiew Sing-Ping and Linda Koh, all from the School of Civil and Environmental Engineering. Following presentations on the work and courses provided by the University, we discussed Accreditation of relevant courses, including their Bachelor of Engineering courses in Civil Engineering and Environmental Engineering, after which we were given a tour of the engineering test laboratories of the School. Of particular interest was the research in underground technology and rock engineering programmes with the potential to provide deep underground caverns to provide storage and possible residential elements.



*L-r: Prof. Fung Tat Ching, John Hooper, John Humphries, Assoc. Prof. Chiew Sing-Ping – Nan Yang Technological University*

Our next stop was Trent Global College of Technology and Management for a meeting with Teng Kwok Kheong, a Fellow of the ABE and advisor on the Academic and Examination Board, to discuss collaboration and Accreditation of relevant Heriot-Watt Bachelor degree university programmes. Following a presentation



Far left: Teng Kwok Kheong FBEng, Chief Executive, Trent Global College of Technology and Management, Singapore

to students on the ABE, including its history, vision, mission and values together with routes to membership, we had about 100 new students sign up to become student members of the Association. We were impressed with the commitment, enthusiasm and stamina of the undergraduates as they were attending lectures on two/three evenings per week and at weekends as well as holding down full time jobs and undertaking assignments in their 'spare' time. We were made to feel very welcome by students and there was a great deal of interest in the Association. There also appears to be huge potential to attract student, associate and corporate members in the Region. Although we have had a Chapter in Hong Kong and also Malaysia we had not previously established one in Singapore, but this visit has started that process and we should achieve this in 2013 with steady growth in numbers and progression through to corporate membership. Students have an advantage in Singapore in that the Singapore Government provides grant funding up to 90% of total course fees for full-time students, making education very cost effective.

### Malaysia

The following morning, 02 April, we caught the Malaysia Airlines flight to Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, and were met at the airport and taken to INTI International University (INTI) by our Member Assoc Prof Dr Lee Sin Chai. Discussions on Accreditation of their courses and a presentation to students on the ABE took place. Once again we received positive feedback from students and we had about 50 students join as members.



Following the presentation, we were taken to Manipal International University (MIU) located close by. There are a number of universities and colleges clustered around this area, 45km south of Kuala Lumpur, and there



l-r: John Hooper, John Humphries, Vice Chancellor Tan Sri Dato' Dr Mohamed Salleh, Manipal International University, Malaysia

is huge investment in privately funded universities. MIU's campus is currently under development with the first phase completed in 2012. Further development will see the campus grow, over a five-year period, to over 140 acres at a cost in excess of USD 200m. We were shown a model of the proposed complex which will have most impressive facilities and is being developed to comply with the highest Green Building Standard, demonstrating their commitment to providing an education ecosystem which they believe will inspire minds to create, innovate and revolutionise the industry they serve. We met with Tan Sri Dato' Dr Mohamed Salleh, Vice Chancellor, together with other distinguished members of university staff to discuss Accreditation of one of their BSc degrees which is now progressing.

On 03 April, we met with Datuk Sindra Rajoo, the Director of the Kuala Lumpur Regional Centre for Arbitration (KLRC) and Rammit Kaur, Head of Legal Services. The Government of Malaysia has accorded KLRC independence and certain privileges and immunities for the purpose of executing its functions as an international institution. It adopts the UNCITRAL Arbitration Rules with modifications.



l-r: Datuk Sindra Rajoo, Rammit Kaur, John Hooper, John Humphries, Isaac Sinder MBEng, Assoc. Prof. Sr Dr Adi Irfan Che Ani

Next we visited the Royal Institution of Surveyors Malaysia (RISM) to discuss collaboration and recognition of the Association in Malaysia. Regrettably, due to time constraints, we had little time before we had to move on to our next appointment with the Mayor of Kuala Lumpur. However, initial contacts had been made and it is hoped that this may lead to greater co-operation in the future.



With Tunku Sr. Dr Fauzi Tunka Dato' Abdul Malek, Chief Executive, Royal Institution of Surveyors and the ABE Malaysia Chapter committee

Next stop was at the Kuala Lumpur City Hall to meet with the Mayor of Kuala Lumpur, Datuk Ahmed Phesal Talib, and Directors from City Hall Planning and Building Control Department. We were given a presentation on the Planning and Building Control systems in place and there was general similarity with UK systems. However, proposals are being considered for suitably registered persons to

self-certify the plan stage of Building Control applications, with the City Council remaining responsible for inspection and completion/certification of the completed project. The importance of Building Engineers for ensuring compliance of complex city developments, such as those evident in Kuala Lumpur, with Regulations and sustainability considerations were discussed. The Planning Approval Process, Planning and Building Enforcements and further improvements in Planning Approval and Enforcement were also discussed. It seems that issues relating to non-compliance and unauthorised works are the same the world over! During discussions, we explored the particular expertise that many of our members have in this field and ways in which the Association and its local members may be better recognised.

Following on from this, we continued our journey meeting with the Chief Executive of the Construction Industry Development Board (CIDB) in Malaysia to find out about their plans for the future and to determine possible areas of common interest and collaboration. We were then taken to the office of Dr Ahmed Bin Ramly, Chair of ABE Malaysian Chapter, to meet the Committee and discuss the future promotion and development of ABE in Malaysia before being guests at a buffet Steamboat fish meal in a semi-open area; you know it's freshly cooked when you do it yourself! This was an extremely pleasant end to the day, allowing time to socialise, relax a little, and to converse with ABE members in a less formal setting. This was an extremely busy and ambitious programme with hardly a minute to spare. Certainly we made the most of our limited time in Kuala Lumpur and this would not have been possible without considerable help from ABE members and committee who kindly assisted with arrangements, transport, etc. Their help is gratefully acknowledged.



*ABE Malaysia Chapter committee*

Whilst in Malaysia, the Prime Minister, Najib Tun Razak, announced dissolution of Parliament which signifies the start of the General Election which will take place on 05 May 2013. It is seen as a major test for the ruling party which has been in power for 56 years.

**Hong Kong**



After our hectic schedule in Kuala Lumpur, it was (relatively) early to bed and (very) early to rise to travel 37 miles to Kuala Lumpur airport for our onward journey to Hong Kong where we met the Chairman and Treasurer of the Hong Kong Chapter for dinner to discuss the next day's agenda. The next day, 05 April, we visited the Hong Kong University,

*l-r: Ir Dr Teddy Chun-wah Ng FBEng, John Hooper, John Humphries, Keith Po Ki Chow FBEng*





School of Professional and Continuing Education (HKUSPACE) to meet the Principal Programme Director, Dr T.M. Kwong, and Programme Manager, Dr Esther Cheung, to discuss Accreditation of some courses followed by discussions with the Hong Kong

Institute of Environmentalists.

In the evening we attended the Hong Kong Chapter AGM, CPD and Reception. Following a slight delay to allow those attending to finish work and get through rush hour traffic, the President welcomed everyone to the meeting, set out the agenda for the evening and thanked the sponsors. Delegates attending were Corporate members, Associates and non-members wishing to learn more about the Association. The CEO had received a number of nominations for election to the Committee, chaired by Ir Dr Teddy Chun-wah Ng, which were accepted. We then gave a presentation on the ABE



*L-r: Dr Esther Chung, Dr Kwong Tsz-man, John Hooper, John Humphries, Keith Po Ki Chow FBEng, Ir Dr Teddy Chun-wah Ng FBEng*



including routes to membership, upgrading and details regarding award of Chartered Engineer and Chartered Environmentalist qualifications. We also highlighted the process regarding application for Royal Charter and progress to date and this was of considerable interest to those in attendance.

Following our presentation, Dr Teddy Chun-Wah Ng, Chairman of the Chapter and Vice President of the International Feng Shui Federation, provided a fascinating presentation on Feng Shui in the Built Environment giving many examples of good and bad Feng Shui. He explained the principles and theory in creating a harmonious built environment and advised that the application of Feng Shui theory to the Building Industry needs addressing, especially in the Chinese property market throughout the world – perhaps a suitable topic for CPD in the UK as more Chinese investment in real estate occurs. After the Feng Shui presentation, a reception was held when we fielded questions regarding the Association and routes to membership, etc. The evening went very well. Everybody seemed to enjoy themselves and appeared genuinely pleased to meet with the President and CEO and to have an update regarding the ABE, membership routes and to discuss their own personal circumstances. Many individuals signed up for one-to-ones over the next two days to resolve particular issues and/or questions regarding membership, upgrading or becoming Chartered Engineers or Chartered Environmentalists. These sessions were particularly useful since we could provide further, more detailed, information as to the best route through to corporate membership than could be given in a comparatively brief presentation.

### The future

Now we are back, the work begins on providing further information to Universities and reviewing programmes for accreditation of degrees and diploma courses. In addition, there is a considerable amount of administrative work getting all the new student members on the database and establishing our web-based communication with them with a view to progression upon qualification and gaining suitable experience. We will be identifying previous graduates from the Universities who qualify for membership where we recognise the standard of their degree course. Hong Kong University has become an Academic Affiliate of ABE and we look forward to building our relationship with them.

We can now move forward to establish the Singapore Chapter working with a local professional body and see no reason why, in time, we could not have a thriving substantial membership within Singapore.

We will continue to strengthen our communications with local professional bodies and organisations with a view to obtaining greater recognition for the Association and local members and will provide support and contributions to the work of officials at Kuala Lumpur City Hall should this be required. The membership of the ABE Malaysia Chapter Committee will be finalised and introduce CPD and training courses to Malaysia.

In Hong Kong we have a strong Chapter Committee and will be providing Membership interviews locally. Since our return we have had lots of enquiries about membership.

All in all it was a hectic visit but very worthwhile and will strengthen our International Standing.

**John Humphries, President, ABE**

**John Hooper, CEO, ABE**